



Environmental Fact Sheet

September 2001

St. Maries Creosote Site

St. Maries, Idaho

In August 2001, the City of St. Maries and Carney Products Company, Ltd., two of the site's potentially responsible parties (PRPs), agreed to conduct a site study and prepare a cleanup plan, called a "Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study" (RI/FS). The study will assess the nature and extent of contamination, assess any long-term risks to human health or the environment, and evaluate cleanup options. It should be finished by the summer of 2003.

In December 2000, EPA proposed adding the site to the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL), EPA's list of the nation's most contaminated sites targeted for cleanup. At this time, EPA is delaying a decision on whether to list the St. Maries site on the NPL, while the RI/FS is conducted under the Consent Order (see below).

Listing on the National Priorities List still remains an option for the future. Future decisions on listing will depend on the type of cleanup remedy that is identified for the site, as well as the willingness of the PRPs to voluntarily do the cleanup.

City and Carney Products to Take Lead on Site Investigation

Over the past several months, the City of St. Maries and Carney Products Company, Ltd. have been negotiating with EPA for an Administrative Order on Consent, or Consent Order. The City of St. Maries has been named a PRP because it owns the property, and Carney Products has been named a PRP because it currently operates a business there. The Consent Order was signed on August 27, 2001, and calls for the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study. It legally binds the parties and provides a framework and EPA requirements for how the work is to be done. EPA and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe will oversee the work, as the site is located on the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation.

Another potentially responsible party, B. J. Carney and Company, failed to reach agreement with the other parties, and therefore has not joined the Consent Order.

What Happens in the Investigation and Feasibility Study?

Before a site can be cleaned up or reclaimed, it is important to identify where the contamination is and what risks it may pose to human health and the environment.

EPA's study, called a "Remedial Investigation" (RI), will address questions like:

1. What kinds of contamination exist at this site and how much is there?
2. How much of the contamination is moving, how fast is it moving, and where?
3. How far does the contaminated groundwater extend?
4. How far does the soil contamination associated with the former wood-treating facility

extend?

5. How much contamination has already flowed into the St. Joe River?
6. Does site contamination affect Tribal water quality standards for the St. Joe River?

Once site information is gathered, the PRPs will do a risk assessment to look at potential health risks to people and the environment. It is part of the RI, and will address:

1. What kinds of health concerns might people encounter if they live or work at or near the site?
2. What risks may be posed to animals and the environment?
3. Does the contamination pose a risk to nearby domestic water supplies?

Next, the PRPs will evaluate various cleanup options in a “Feasibility Study” (FS). EPA and the Tribe will oversee the evaluation of cleanup options. The cleanup options will be evaluated using criteria that include overall protection of human health and the environment, cost, and Tribal and community acceptance. EPA will then recommend a cleanup option and ask for public comment. After EPA considers all comments and selects a final cleanup plan, it will be designed and implemented.

Next Steps

Site investigation will focus on the area of the former wood-treating facility and the river immediately north of the treating facility. If contamination is found beyond this area, the boundaries of the study area will be expanded. Additional sampling will be required if a contamination source area is found outside of the initial study area, or if EPA believes that cleanup investigation data indicate a potential for contamination elsewhere at the site.

Before field work can begin at the site, the PRPs will look closely at all existing site information to identify any data gaps. Findings will be compiled in a “Summary of Data Gaps Report.” The PRPs will also submit the following work products, which must be approved by EPA, in consultation with the Tribe, before field work can begin:

- ➔ Project Management Plan
- ➔ RI/FS Work Plan
- ➔ Sampling and Analysis Plan (includes Field Sampling Plan and Quality Assurance Project Plan)
- ➔ Data Management Plan

Stay Tuned for More Information on Community Interviews

EPA's Community Involvement Coordinator and Project Manager will conduct interviews with interested community members and local government officials before field work begins at the site. We will be asking people about their site concerns and how they would like to be involved in EPA's decision process, and use this information to develop our Community Involvement Plan. We expect to visit the St. Maries community in early 2002.

For more information on how to get involved, please call

Debra Sherbina at 1-800-424-4372, extension 0247.

Preliminary Site Cleanup Goals

(Based on Available Information)

- Control or eliminate sources of creosote contamination, and other contamination at the site
- Meet Coeur d'Alene Tribal Water Quality Standards in the St. Joe River
- Protect nearby domestic water supplies, if any, impacted by site contaminants
- Prevent or reduce storm water runoff containing contaminated soil from reaching the St. Joe River
- Reduce or eliminate any exposure to contamination at the site which could impact people or the environment

Technical Assistance Grant Available to a Citizen Group

A Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) is available for any site proposed to the Superfund National Priorities List. As a proposed site, St. Maries is eligible for a grant. The grant provides funds to citizen groups that are affected by Superfund. Citizen groups can apply for grant money to hire technical advisors to help interpret and explain technical materials produced as part of the investigation and cleanup process. The EPA, as well as site contractors, will also be available to answer community questions throughout the process.

Grants up to \$50,000 are available from EPA. A local share contribution of 20% of total program cost is required. Groups can count the value of volunteer services and contributions of supplies (called "in-kind contributions") toward the required 20% match. To receive more detailed information about TAGs and qualifications, please call ***Jeanne O'Dell, EPA Region 10 TAG Coordinator, at (206) 553-6919, or toll-free at 1-800-424-4372, extension 6919.***

Health and Environmental Concerns

Previous tests indicate that three sources of creosote contamination exist: the former wood treating facility, contaminated soil in the river bank, and contaminated river bottom sediments. This contamination could affect sensitive animal habitat and endangered fishery resources in the St. Joe River. The contamination is also a human health concern. Long-term exposure to low levels of creosote can cause skin damage, such as blistering or peeling. Long-term exposure to higher levels of creosote and direct contact with the skin can cause cancer.

Site Background

The St. Maries Creosote site is on the outskirts of the city of St. Maries, Idaho, along the south bank of the St. Joe River, in Benewah County. The site is within the boundaries of the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation. The facility operated as a creosote wood pole treating plant from the late 1930s until sometime in the 1960s. The site is currently being used for peeling, sorting, and storage of untreated wood poles.

In December 1998, the City of St. Maries, which has leased the property to various entities since the 1930s, reported an oily sheen on the bank and in the water of the St. Joe River to the federal National Response Center. Because it was necessary to address this creosote release quickly, EPA issued an order to the City and the current lessee of the property, Carney Products Company, Ltd., to remove the creosote seeps and contaminated soil along the river bank. In February 1999, the City and Carney Products did an emergency removal, digging up about 195 tons of debris and contaminated soil and moving it to a hazardous waste landfill. This emergency removal action was successful in stabilizing the site. However, a great deal of creosote contamination remains.

Since the removal action was finished, creosote has been observed intermittently in the river. It appears to be moving upward, seeping from the river bottom next to the site. Additional sampling in November 1999 detected elevated levels of creosote in the St. Joe River sediments, particularly along the riverbank in front of the site. The site was proposed to the EPA National Priorities List in December 2000.

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You may also call our toll free number: **1-800-424-4372**

EPA's Internet homepage: **<http://www.epa.gov/r10earth>**
To reach the webpage for the St. Maries site, click on "Index," then "S."

To ensure effective communication with everyone, additional services can be made available to persons with disabilities by contacting one of the numbers above.



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